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Edel Lamb

Learning to be Boys: Reading the Lessons of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and Marston's *What You Will*

- 1 Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* can be read as a "youthful" play on multiple levels.¹ As an early work, most likely written and performed c. 1594/1595, it potentially offers an insight into "young" or "early" Shakespeare.² It is also preoccupied with ideas pertinent to youth. From the recurrent images of the childish god of love, Cupid, to the play's pageboy character, Moth, to the youthful lords who dedicate themselves to a prolonged period of learning and the "wise girls" who school their suitors in their acts of courtship, youth is at the centre of this play.³ The play's recent critical history attests to the extent to which contemporary cultures of learning and pedagogy, from book learning and the institution of the schoolroom to formative childish games, inform its themes and wordplay.⁴ This essay will suggest that the comic depictions of diverse modes of education are part of the play's wider examination of the ways in which age and learning might produce early modern identities. It will focus on one of the play's boys – the pageboy, schoolboy and boy actor, Moth. It will compare him to another early modern dramatic schoolboy, Holofernes Pippo of John Marston's *What You Will*, performed by the Children of Paul's c. 1601, to argue that theatrical depictions of schoolboy lessons are a means of producing boyhood, a term that was used from the 1570s to refer to the state of being a boy.⁵
- 2 When Armado asks Moth in Act 3, Scene 1 of *Love's Labour's Lost* "What wilt thou prove?", the boy offers the witty response of "A man, if I live; and this, 'by', 'in', and 'without', upon the instant" (3.1.37-39). In offering to prove his master's love through this linguistic exercise, Moth occupies the role of schoolteacher instructing his "negligent student" (3.1.33) and schoolboy performing his learning. The grammar lesson delivered here suggests that manhood is something that must be proven or achieved. It comically juxtaposes the slow process of becoming a man through aging ("if I live") with the mastery of language and of love. Moth posits apparently conflicting modes of "proving" a man: age, courtship and the display of learning. Manhood in this construction is not only a gendered state but depends on temporality or age and on the display of learning – in this case, a command of prepositions and the proof of an argument. The ways in which early modern humanist educational programmes aimed to instill gendered identities have been widely examined.⁶ Yet the extent to which these gendered states are also inflected by age categories has not yet been fully explored. The connections between age and learning in constituting masculine identity are evident in this staging of the grammar lesson. They are manifest in Moth's liminal state as a *boy*: a state that encompasses his gender, age, social status and his witty use of learning. The ways in which learning produces a range of masculine states (boyhood, youth, manhood, and old age) are further explored throughout the play.
- 3 In "Theorizing Age with Gender: Bly's Boys, Feminism, and Maturity Masculinity", Judith Gardiner persuasively argues that age categories should perform a more prominent role in gender theory. Age, she proposes, enables us to conceptualize gender developmentally and "allows for the possibility of more adequate models".⁷ The gendering of the boy in early modern culture offers an interesting case study for this approach. The aging of the early modern boy was marked by a number of social rituals that frequently functioned as indicators of the boy's emerging masculine identity. For example, rituals at the end of infancy, often perceived to be the first stage of childhood and ending around the age of seven, included the breeching of the boy and the movement from the domestic space to the space of work or the all-male institution of the grammar school.⁸ These social practices interpreted and attempted to control the developing physiological status of the boy during his transition from a feminised childhood to adult manhood in middle age or "the strongest age", when, according to early seventeenth-

century tracts on age, “a man is come to the highest degree of perfection”.⁹ In contrast to the ideals underlying these social rituals, early modern boys did not experience a single and definitive shift from childhood to manhood. The gaps between ideology and experience signal the unstable nature of early modern concepts of masculinity and expose the fundamental intersections between age and gender that need to be considered.

- 4 Theorizing early modern gender developmentally, as Gardiner suggests, offers a fresh understanding of the complexities of early modern masculinities. Reassessing pedagogical practices through an analysis of the concepts of boyhood and manhood put forward by books produced to train boys in languages, verbal skill and logic, this essay will raise questions about the “manhood” that these all-male institutions aimed to produce. It will then examine the comic representations of these practices in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *What You Will* to explore the multiple concepts of early modern masculinity, defined by age and learning, offered on the stage. It will suggest that although the educational system aimed to produce manhood at a certain age, early modern masculine identities exist not only as boyhood and manhood but as a variety of categories on a developmental scale. Moth and Pippo are particularly productive points of focus for this analysis. Both occupy positions as pageboys and schoolboys. As Katie Knowles proposes in her recent monograph, *Shakespeare's Boys*, Moth, although technically a witty page, is in essence “the precocious sixteenth-century schoolboy” whose function is to “highlight the educational strengths and weaknesses of the other characters”.¹⁰ Pippo moves from the schoolroom to apprenticeship during the course of *What You Will*. Moreover, they are young boy actors both within the narratives of the plays (Moth takes part in rehearsals and in the court performance; Pippo participates in an act of disguise) and in the theatre. *Love's Labour's Lost* is written for a company that seems to include many young actors and attends, Evelyn Tribble suggests, to training its young boy actors.¹¹ *What You Will* is performed by the young players of the children's company at Paul's.¹² By examining the multiple dimensions of boyhood in the dramatic fictions and on the stages of the companies that likely performed these plays, it is possible to consider the extent to which performing these roles not only teaches the characters to be boys but forms a crucial part of the young boy actor's theatrical training.

Schoolboy Lessons: Training boys to be men

- 5 The training of the boy in various levels of literacy from the basic recital of ABC texts in English to the Latin-language lesson had a significant role in producing gendered subjects in early modern culture. Education in grammar schools, for example, functioned as one method of producing men as schoolboys were instructed in the memorization, pronunciation and imitation of *exempla*; encouraged to recite their learning “without book” with the appropriate gesture, vocals and audacity; and to draw on their learning to invent logical arguments.¹³ John Brinsley's *Children's Dialogues* (1617), a series of dialogues to be studied alone, translated and performed in the classroom, indicates the ways in which school lessons attempted to inculcate masculine traits. These dialogues repeatedly depict the movement from the home to school and the appropriate display of school learning in terms of a straightforward transition from childhood to manhood. One dialogue, for instance, presents two schoolboys having a physical argument over a chair – a row that is quickly ended by one's mastery of language which leads the other to conclude “Now I judge thee [to be] a man”.¹⁴ A number of dialogues also depict well-versed schoolboys who have learned to construct an argument to provide “prettily cunning” excuses for lateness or bad behaviour.¹⁵ Answering all the questions posed to them by schoolmasters correctly and wittily, these boys escape the violent punishment of beating that pervades this text. While this outwitting of the schoolmaster threatens to disrupt hierarchies of authority and age, this is contained within the context of the schoolroom. It is set up as the adept deployment of lessons learned.
- 6 The large quantity of books produced to provide dialogues, questions and answers and classical examples for schoolboys meant that this material was not confined to the schoolroom. Similar material and formats were imitated in a range of books, such as handbooks, instruction manuals and even the oft-printed *The Booke of Merrie Riddles*. The title page for the 1617 edition of

this book declared that it was a collection of riddles, “proper questions and witty proverbs” for “pleasant pastime” and “usefull” and “behovefull” “for any young man or childe to knowe whether he be quicke-witted or no”.¹⁶ The material provided to schoolboys to “prove” men thus circulated beyond the schoolroom, available for use without instruction in how and when it should be used. Consequently, as the scholar Lampatho complains in Marston’s *What You Will*, you could “make a parrot now / As good a man as he in fourteen nights”.¹⁷ Lampatho’s objection is against Simplicius, the play’s fool, who has not been schooled, and is directed specifically at his tendency to recite set pieces but not to “vent a syllable / Of his own creating” (2.1.835-6). In *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, the princess and her ladies are similarly disapproving of the men’s imitative love poetry, causing Berowne to claim that he will no longer “trust to speeches penned, / Nor to the motion of a schoolboy’s tongue” (5.2.402-403). Yet good schoolboys were encouraged to move beyond repetition, to master their learning and transform it to construct arguments. As Richard Halpern points out, humanist theory encouraged the self-fashioning of autonomous subjects.¹⁸

7 The early modern theatre frequently parodies school lessons. Plays such as Shakespeare’s *The Merry Wives of Windsor* comically represent the failure of the pedagogical approach through schoolboy characters who cannot recite their lessons. The schoolmaster’s testing of William Page’s grammar lesson on play day at the request of his mother in act four scene one undermines the ideals of the humanist education system.¹⁹ While Mistress Page seeks to disprove her husband’s contention that “my son profits nothing in the world at his book”, the errors made by William, who does not even recognise that this is a translation lesson when he answers that a stone is a “pebble” (echoing Mistress Quickly’s bawdy puns that result from her misinterpretations of the schoolmaster’s Latin), question what “profit” might be had from such schooling.²⁰ Yet, while the master dismisses William to play when he finally admits that has forgotten his lesson (4.1.65), suggesting a return to childish activities, Mistress Page concludes “He is a better scholar than I thought he was” (4.1.69). It may be, as Elizabeth Pittenger suggests, that Mistress Page believes the “investment in school has paid off” and although William does not profit directly from his book he profits “indirectly from his going to school, from his privilege as a male subject”.²¹ Even if schooling offers this advantage, it nonetheless falls far from achieving its scholarly aims in this dramatic representation.

8 The depiction of school lessons on the early modern stage undermines humanist aims but as Lynn Enterline has argued “Shakespeare’s engagement with the humanist grammar school goes well beyond explicit political and moral critique”.²² The staging of lessons offers a more complex engagement with processes of subject formation via schooling. Like *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *What You Will* expose a series of failings but they also explore the unexpected effects of successful schooling. What happens when the autonomous boys produced by this school system draw on their learning beyond the controlled context of the classroom? Or when boys like Moth, who, as Knowles suggests, is representative of the schoolboy but who has accessed his knowledge through “observation” (3.1.25), draw on widely circulated lessons? These plays suggest that boys do not always learn how to be men from the lessons of the schoolroom. Their critical treatment of early modern schooling often considers learning in relation to age categories. While the example with which I opened sets aging alongside learning in the proving of manhood, these plays simultaneously depict the negative effects of prolonged education in terms of a rapid progression through the stages of the life cycle. Berowne, for instance, speaks out against the “little academe” (1.1.13) of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as “Flat treason ’gainst the kingly state of youth” (4.3.289). Attending to age complicates manhood, conceptualizing it developmentally. In the early modern period, manhood was associated with youthful prime or middle age (generally seen to occur between 25 and 50). It is described in Henry Cuffe’s *The Differences of the Ages of Man’s Life*, for instance, as “flourishing man age” and “the strongest age” in which “a man is come to the highest degree of perfection”.²³ Other stages of the life cycle, whether infancy, childhood or boyhood, young age, youth or adolescentia that precede ‘manhood’ or old age and ‘decrepit’ old age that follow it, are determined by varying degrees in relation to this ideal stage.

- 9 *What You Will*'s scholar Lampatho is associated with the latter stages of old age, described as "a fusty cask, / Devoted to mouldy customs of hoar'd eld" (2.1.450-451). His association with the characteristics of old age does not result from his chronological age, but instead has been produced by his seven years study which "wasted lamp-oil, bated my flesh, / Shrunk up my veins" (2.2.855-856). He complains that his lessons or the "company of old *frenetici* / Did eat my youth" (2.2.880-881), extending the metaphors of consuming knowledge that pervade both plays to suggest that instead of the appropriate consumption, or to use Erasmus' term, "digestion" of learning, his lessons consume his manhood.²⁴ In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the pedant, Holofernes, is also depicted as having passed the quick-witted stage of life in the imagery of old age deployed by Moth, when he claims that he has "true wit" (5.1.53) which is "Offered by a child to an old man, which is wit-old" (5.1.54). Although grammar school texts posit education as a crucial means of producing an ideal version of masculine identity, prolonged book-learning, the theatre suggests, instead produces this stereotype of "soft and slow" (2.2.883) old men "finding numbness" in what should be their "nimble age" (2.2.882). Study and schooling are thus common experiences for boys, something to be undertaken during youth, yet they are simultaneously depicted as potentially destructive to youth.
- 10 The intersections between early modern schooling, age and masculinity are further interrogated through the plays' child characters. *What You Will* contains a schoolroom scene in which four boys are asked to "repeat your lesson without a book" (2.2.707) in response to the schoolmaster's questions, based on the standard Latin grammar book of the time, William Lily's *Short Introduction to Grammar*. The depiction of the Latin-language lesson draws attention to many of the pedagogical methods used in the all-male grammar school and implies the inadequacy of these techniques. Despite some successful efforts, the boys fail to recite their lesson and instead offer comical and bawdy puns on the translation of "lapides" as stone (2.2.726), similar in tone to William's errors in the lesson staged in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. When the schoolmaster insists that one of the boys, Nathaniel, repeat his lesson "faster, faster" (2.2.744), he mimics the pupil's rapid list of Latin words with a stream of nonsense: "Rup, tup, snup, slup, bor, hor, cor, mor – holla, holla, holla!" (2.2.748-749). In showing that Nathaniel's response is inaccurate, the master's deliberately incoherent recital hints that the lesson itself is nonsense and gestures towards the potential social irrelevance of the acquisition of Latin literacy for boys. A common outcome of this schooling was the production of young men unable to make a living in any technical or humbler trades.²⁵ Another schoolboy, Holofernes Pippo, offers a stumbling attempt at reciting the lesson and is quickly removed from the schoolroom to receive training as a page for Simplicius – a plot development that signals the transmission of knowledge between the grammar school and other social contexts. In this position of service, Pippo immediately demonstrates an increasing command over his lessons. Constructing his sentences erroneously in relaying his master's message to Lampatho enables mockery of his master as he puns on his name, stating "My Simplicias master" (2.2.903) – an act of ridicule that is not recognized by Lampatho, but which Pippo gleefully follows up with "Ha, ha! 'Has bought me a fine dagger, and a hat and a feather; I can say *as in praesenti* now" (2.2.907-908). Perhaps inspired by this material reward, Pippo deploys the grammar school lesson beyond the structures of the schoolroom to get one up on his new master – presenting himself as the witty pageboy.
- 11 Pippo is further inducted into this role during a gathering of his new peers: a group of pages. This scene parallels the classroom scene, but in contrast masters are absent and the pages construct their own modes of authority. One boy, Bidet, adopts the role of "Emperor of Cracks, Prince of Pages" (3.3.1269-1270) and presides over this mock court in which the masters' actions are put on trial. He mocks his role as leader and insists upon his own status as a youth, claiming "Now let me stroke my beard and I had it, and speak wisely if I knew how" (3.3.1273-1274). He thus exposes the disparity between his youthful status and that of the seemingly wise adult men usually in authority, mocking the complacent wisdom of authority figures and celebrating his own juvenile state. As the pages offer their accounts of abusive service, this functions as a space in which they can critique their masters and share their singular experiences as boys. Pippo, however, is not automatically part of this

community. When asked “is he of our brotherhood yet?”, he responds “Not yet [...] but as little an infant as I am I will, and with the grace of wit I will deserve it” (3.3.1346-1348). This emphasis on his littleness and infancy is significant. Infancy is variously described as the period preceding childhood or as the first part of childhood in early modern accounts of the stages of life. For Cuffe, it marks the beginning of childhood, from birth to the age of three or four, and is characterised by the fact that ‘children in their infancie have no actual evident use of their reason’.²⁶ In *The Office of Christian Parents*, it is a distinct stage of life “from the birth till seaven yeeres of age, because till that time he is not so perfect in speech”.²⁷ It is a state preceding command of speech and reason. In the earlier classroom scene Pippo is described as not yet being at the “years of discretion”. Lacking in knowledge in the classroom and in wit among the pages, he is thus described as “infant” rather than a boy. In order to become one of the “brotherhood”, he must demonstrate that he is deserving of it by the “grace of his wit” and cozen his master, by disguising himself as a merchant’s wife in a strange reversal of the breeching process. The play implies that where the Latin lesson failed at instilling masculine traits, performance and trickery succeed. However, these traits are dependent upon Pippo’s aged and social status and on the subversive nature of this act. The act of outwitting the master does not make Pippo a man. It paves the way for his integration into the community of boys and their challenging of the aged, gendered and social hierarchies of service. In other words, it produces his boyhood. In a final plot twist, however, Pippo is expelled from the brotherhood in spite of this act as he breaks another of their rules (in having a dice). He is thus forced back to where he started, claiming: “I’ll to school again, that I will: I left *as in praesenti*, and I’ll begin in *as in praesenti*” (5.1.1910-1911). The trickery of the pages has enabled him to become a boy, but perhaps the gender and class-inflected training of the grammar schools promises a more attractive adulthood.

12 School lessons also pervade *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, in the various characters’ experiments in language, displays of logic, grammar, rhetoric, acts of reading, writing and versifying. As Ursula Potter has pointed out, the play directs attention specifically to classroom culture through the staging of the schoolmaster and the use of terminology reminiscent of the schoolroom, such as Moth’s act of proving.²⁸ Moth, of course, is well versed in the lessons of the schoolroom. He demonstrates the knowledge of classical literature expected of the grammar school boy as he adopts the position of scholar and teacher in advising Armado on the examples he might use in his love letter. He displays his command of grammar and his ability to utilize logic in his exercise on the use of prepositions to express love. He further demonstrates his ability to appropriate lessons in act five scene one when he offers Holofernes the lesson from the hornbook, asking “What is ‘a’ ‘b’ spelled backwards, with the horn on his head?” (5.1.42-43). Moth adapts the questions from this common text to pose the bawdy riddle that Holofernes does not understand as he naively answers “Ba, *pueritia*, with a horn added” (5.1.44). While Moth continues to mock Holofernes, who can only offer nonsensical answers, the schoolmaster attempts to reduce this page to a lesser status. As well as calling him a child, or “*pueritia*”, he attempts to dismiss the page to children’s games, claiming “Thou disputes like an infant. Go whip thy gig” (5.1.57).

13 Holofernes’ repeated efforts to designate Moth a child or infant, and hence inferior, indicate the extent to which Moth has challenged the hierarchies of teacher-pupil and adult-child through this witty exchange. The autonomous manipulation of lessons beyond the schoolroom by this character who is young and in a status of service clearly challenge the authority of this “old” schoolmaster. In doing so, they form part of the play’s ridicule of the figure of the pedagogue and of what Patricia Parker calls the series of “preposterous reversals”.²⁹ Moth’s state as a boy is emphasized as he sets his knowledge against that of his master, “the tender juvenal” against the “tough senor”, and against the schoolmaster, “child” against the “old wit”. As H. R. Woudhuysen points out, Moth is exclusively referred to throughout the play as the “boy” or “child”, terms that associate him with Cupid in the play but which set him apart from all other characters, even those who temporarily adopt the positions of schoolboys or scholars.³⁰ Whether or not we read him as schoolboy, Moth is repeatedly constructed as a *boy* in terms of his youth,

his social status and his deployment of learning. He is the “well-educated infant” (1.2.85), “a most acute juvenal” (3.1.57) and “pretty and apt” (1.2.17), that is “‘pretty’, because little [...] ‘apt’ because quick” (1.2.20-22). It is this apt or quick wit that is his dominant characteristic and is representative of his boyhood. It is often described in aged-terms in *Love's Labour's Lost*. Unlike the school text books which imagine the display of wit as part of the construction of manhood, this play assesses most of the characters in terms of their wit: it is appropriate to the eloquence of the courtly ladies, it defines the men of the court, and the rustic characters are marked by their lack of it. Different forms of wit are also associated with particular aged and gendered states in *What You Will*. When one pageboy defers to Pippo as “men of wit such as thyself” (3.3.1352-3), Pippo claims that he only has “wit I think for my age or so” (3.3.1354-5). Wit was recognized more widely as an integral part of boyhood in the period. Richard Mulcaster, for example, noted “three naturall powers in children, Witte to conceive by, Memorie to retaine by, Discretion to discern by”.³¹ Yet it is primarily how and when wit is used that makes it representative of the plays' young characters' boyhoods. “Boyhood”, Henry Cuffe writes in 1607, inclines “us to sportfulness, talke and learning”.³² Moth, the youthful boy, is characterised by his playful adaptation of the lessons of the hornbook and the grammar school to assert an aged and gendered status, distinct from manhood, but also distinct from the infant games with which Holofernes attempts to associate him, from the youth imagined by Berowne, or from the old age of the pedant. It is the witty and subversive deployment of learning from his position of service that characterises Moth as the child, boy or juvenal.

Learning to be Boys

The ideals of a humanist programme of education map a straightforward development from feminised childhood to adult masculinity characterised by logic, reason and wit. This representation of gender in relation to age has a clear ideological purpose as it offers a concept of manhood that is idealistic, achievable and stable. However, as the representations of these educational processes in the theatre demonstrate, the intersections between age and gender result in more complex understandings of gender identity in the period. Early modern masculinity cannot just be seen in terms of manhood, or of boyhood versus manhood; instead childhood, youth, manhood and old age are categories on a continuum of aged masculinity. Moreover, the learning intended to facilitate the progression of these young male characters to manhood in fact equips these characters with the material to produce their boyhoods. Yet these boyhoods are not formed solely through knowledge of school lessons but through the youthful characters' disruptive uses of them. They draw out their knowledge to assert their identities as boys. Of course, this definition of boyhood means that while it is associated with a particular age category, it is not restricted to characters of a particular age. The courtiers of Navarre display behaviour that is in many ways “boyish”. Berowne's reference to youthful games in his cry of “All hid, all hid, an old infant play” (4.3.75) and his description of the “scene of foolery” in which he sees the king transformed to a gnat, Hercules whipping a gig, Nestor playing at “push-pin with the boys” and Timon laughing at idle toys (4.3.160-167) depicts the games of courtship as inherently childish. Moreover, the play's boys, Moth and Cupid, are characterised by their metaphorical doubling in terms of aged identities. The “wimpled, whining, purblind, wayward boy” Cupid, who is paradoxically known as the oldest of the gods and a child, is described by Berowne in terms of this duality as “Signor Junior, giant dwarf” (3.1.175).³³ Moth is further aligned with the play's absent god when he takes on the role of Hercules “in his minority” (5.2.586). Yet in spite of the fluidity of aged states and behaviours manifest in these ‘Signor Junior’ figures, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *What You Will* repeatedly insist upon Moth's and Pippo's states as boys through their associations with the schoolroom and through the various terms used to emphasise their youth.

These characters receive another lesson that highlights their status as boys: that is, as playboys when they are instructed in performance skills. Moth is the herald for the disguised courtiers. This “bold wag” (5.2.108) is instructed by the King and his companions in how to deliver his introductory speech. Once he has “conned” his part, they teach him “action and accent”, how to bear his body, and to “speak audaciously” (5.2.98-104). These lessons, which would

also have been offered in the schoolroom, are seen as unnecessary during this rehearsal as “A better speech was never spoke before” (5.2.123).³⁴ Yet, although Moth has learned the skills common to the schoolboy and player, he is less talented in those required specifically of the theatrical player. He has not yet learned how to react to his audience and in delivering the speech he alters his lines to suit the ladies’ actions – saying “backs” instead of “eyes” when the ladies “*turn their backs to him*” (5.2.161-163). Boyet’s mockery further “put[s] Armado’s page out of his part” (5.2.335), forcing Berowne to interrupt with new cues, reminding this boy of his lines. Moth is presented through this theatrical terminology as a player, and within the fiction of the play he appears inexperienced in this respect.³⁵ This is emphasised further when he performs the part of Hercules silently and in his “minority” as he is not, according to Armado, “quantity enough for that Worthy’s thumb” (5.1.126-127). The boy of the theatre is similarly emphasised in Marston’s *What You Will*. Pippo, who is originally described by his schoolmaster as having a voice “too small” and stature “too low” to be given leave to “play the lady in comedies presented by children” (2.2.797-799) and who worries that “I am too little, speak too small, go too gingerly” (3.3.1379-1380) to act as the merchant’s wife, successfully plays this part to fool his master. He, however, is also largely silent in this role and he follows the lead of an experienced pageboy, who devises the trickery and temporarily “put[s] off [his] greatness” (3.3.1381) to accompany Pippo on his act of gulling.

17 By offering these boy characters the opportunity to try alternative roles, the plays may themselves function as lessons for the boy actors in the roles of Moth and Pippo. The theatrical training of the boy and the novice’s errors comically depicted in Act 5, Scene 2 of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* foreground the apprentice boy actor who performed Moth in the 1590s. In performing this play, he is offered the opportunity to test a range of smaller parts, the herald and Hercules, in addition to demonstrating his talents in the substantial part of the pageboy. The comic references to Moth’s size, which suggest that Moth is simply not physically big enough to play Hercules, renowned for his physical stature and prowess, hint that the boy actor taking on this role was likely amongst the smaller and younger in the company. As T. J. King has demonstrated, it is probable that the performance of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* required six boy actors.³⁶ Young boys, therefore, are also at the heart of the playing company, perhaps taking advantage of the recent dissolution of the children’s playing companies in the late 1580s.³⁷ The boy player of the Children of Paul’s who performed Pippo in 1601 similarly begins his training in performing the woman’s part. This particular boy actor, it seems, has little experience in the theatre. Comic references to his exceptional “littleness” and the suggestive comments on his inability to even perform in “comedies presented by children” (2.2.798) (of which *What You Will* is one) are reinforced by the limitations on the role of Pippo. When the actor playing this part is on stage, he says little; his speeches often echo the cue lines given to him (for instance, in Act 2, Scene 2); and, there is evidence of “shepherding”, in which he is accompanied on stage and directed by more experienced actors. In act two scene two, for example, Simplicius instructs him in his posture (2.2.811) and Lampatho corrects his lines (2.2.902-906); and in Act 5, Scene 1 Bidet accompanies this less experienced page and player in his act of gulling. This role might be interpreted as what Evelyn Tribble terms a “scaffolded role”, one structured for the novice player in order to constrain and prompt his activity.³⁸ These theatrical training practices are metatheatrically reproduced in both plays and serve to reinforce Moth’s and Pippo’s status as novice players and ultimately as boys in training.

18 Playing Moth and playing Pippo, therefore, prepares boy actors for more substantial parts, providing them with the opportunity to practise and refine the basic skills required of the player and allowing them to test a range of roles in terms of gender, age and status. For the young apprentice of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in the early 1590s, it is likely that this on-the-job training was a significant part of his professional experience. For the “too little” boy of the Children of Paul’s it is possible that the performance of *What You Will* may to some extent have functioned as an initiatory act into a community of boy players. The comic roles of schoolboy and page that they successfully perform in these plays, suggests that these young players, at the very least, have already learned how to be boys in the early modern theatre.

Notes

1 This research was supported by the Irish Research Council and by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme (Project ID: DP0988452).

2 On the dating of the play, see H. R. Woudhuysen, "Introduction", *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen, The Arden Shakespeare, London, A & C Black Publishers, 1998, p. 59-61. Work on "early" Shakespeare includes Alfred Harbage, "*Love's Labour's Lost* and the Early Shakespeare", *Philological Quarterly* 41, 1962, 18-36; Eric Sams, *The Real Shakespeare: Retrieving the Early Years*, Yale, Yale University Press, 1997.

3 William Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.58, ed. H. R. Woudhuysen, The Arden Shakespeare, London, A & C Black Publishers, 1998. Further references are given in the text.

4 See, for example, Katie Knowles, *Shakespeare's Boys: A Cultural History*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 90-120; Kathryn Moncrief, "'Teach us, sweet madam': Masculinity, Femininity and Gendered Instruction in *Love's Labour's Lost*", in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction and Performance*, ed. Kathryn McPherson and Kathryn Moncrief, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2013, p. 113-127; Ursula Potter, "The Naming of Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *English Language Notes* 37, 2000, 13-26; Eve Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 49-56.

5 On the dating of this play, see W. Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: The Story of a Theatre Company, 1553-1608*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 39.

6 Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1996; Lynn Enterline, "Rhetoric, Discipline, and the Theatricality of Everyday Life in Elizabethan Grammar Schools", in *Performance to Print in Shakespeare's England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 173-190; Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991; Walter Ong, "Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite", *Studies in Philology* 61.2, 1959, 103-124; Diane Purkiss, *Literature, Gender and Politics During the English Civil War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 1-15; Sanders, *op. cit.*

7 Judith Kegan Gardiner, "Theorizing Age with Gender: Bly's Boys, Feminism, and Maturity Masculinity", in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner, New York, Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 90-118 (p. 113).

8 See Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays*, London, Routledge, 1992, p. 7; Edel Lamb, *Performing Childhood in the Early Modern Theatre: The Children's Playing Companies (1599-1613)*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 29-31; Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 15.

9 John Reading, *The Old Man's Staffe*, London, Bernard Alsop, 1621, STC 20792, p.1; Henry Cuffe, *The Differences of the Ages of Man's Life*, London, Arnold Hatfield, 1607, STC 6103, p. 118.

10 Knowles, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

11 Evelyn Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p. 111-150.

12 On the ages of the players of the Children of Paul's, see Shen Lin, "How Old Were the Children of Paul's?", *Theatre Notebook* 45, 1991, 121-131; Shehzana Mamujee, "'To serve us in that behalf when our pleasure is to call for them': Performing Boys in Renaissance England", *Renaissance Studies*, 28.5, 2014, 714-730, p. 715-716.

13 On early modern education, see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1944; Bushnell, *op. cit.*; Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Europe*, London, Duckworth, 1986; Halpern, *op. cit.*; Helen Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England*, London, Macmillan, 1998; Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain*, London, Longman, 1982.

14 John Brinsley, *Pueriles Confabulatiunculae, or, Children's Dialogues, Little Conferences, or Talkings Together, or Little Speeches Together, or Dialogues Fit for Children*, London, Thomas Mann, 1617, STC 3773, p. 8.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

16 *The Booke of Merrie Riddles*, London, Roger Jackson, 1617, STC 3322.5, title page.

17 John Marston, *What You Will*, ed. M. R. Woodhead, Nottingham, Nottingham Drama Texts, 1980, 2.2.833-834. Further references are in the text.

18 Halpern, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

19 See readings of this scene in Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender and Property*, London, Methuen, 1987, p. 27-9; Elizabeth Pittenger, "Dispatch Quickly: The Mechanical Reproduction of Pages", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42.4, 1991, 389-408.

20 William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 4.1.11-12, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et alii, New York, W. W. Norton & Co, 2008. Further references are given in the text.

21 Pittenger, *op. cit.*, p. 397

22 Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, p. 26.

23 Cuffe, *op. cit.*, p. 118. Cuffe follows Aristotle's understanding of the life cycle as being divided into three main stages: childhood, man age and old age. He then divides each of these into sub-stages: infancy, boyhood youth followed by youthful prime and manhood and finally old age and decrepit old age. For a useful overview of early modern understanding of the stages of the life cycle see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 1-16.

24 See Halpern, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 23. Carla Mazzio goes further in suggesting *Love's Labour's Lost* depicts education as producing men, such as the pedant, who are not fit for social interaction. See "The Melancholy of Print: *Love's Labour's Lost*", in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 186-227 (p. 206).

26 Cuffe, *op. cit.*, p. 118, 127

27 Anon, *The Office of Christian Parents*, London, Cantrell Legge, 1616, STC 5180, p. 43.

28 Ursula Potter, *Pedagogy and Parenting in English Drama, 1560-1610*, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2001, p. 65.

29 Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Reversals: *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Modern Language Quarterly* 54.4, 1993, 435-482.

30 Woudhuysen, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

31 Richard Mulcaster, *Positions Wherein Those Primitive Circumstances Be Examined, Which Are Necessary for the Training Up of Children* (1581), New York, Da Capo Press, 1971, p. 25.

32 Cuffe, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

33 See Jane Kingsley Smith, "Love's Labour's Scorned: The Absence of Cupid on the Shakespearean Stage", *Cahiers Elisabethains* 73, 2008, 9-21 (p. 15-16).

34 On the training of the schoolboy in acting skills, Ursula Potter, "Performing Arts in the Tudor Classroom", in *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare 1485-1590*, ed. Lloyd Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren and Martine Van Elk, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 143-165.

35 Tribble notes that the skill and versatility of the actor playing Moth underpin this comic representation of failure (*op. cit.*, p. 120).

36 T. J. King, *Casting Shakespeare's Plays: London Actors and their Roles, 1590-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 82, 171.

37 See Andrea Crow, "Mediating Boys: Two Angry Women and the Boy Actor's Shaping of 1590s Theatrical Culture", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 65.2, 2014, 180-198 (p. 181).

38 Tribble, *op. cit.*, p. 137-138.

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Résumés

This essay focuses on the lessons of *Love's Labour's Lost*'s pageboy-schoolboy-boy actor, Moth, to examine the production of boyhood in early modern culture. It reads Shakespeare's boy character alongside John Marston's schoolboy, Holofernes Pippo, in *What You Will* to investigate the ways in which school lessons might be deployed to produce aged and gendered identities that complicate traditional understandings of early modern masculinity. Reading the comic staging of lessons in these plays, it will suggest that while the educational system aimed to produce gendered subjects, early modern masculine identities exist as a range of categories on a developmental scale. It will propose that although Moth and Pippo comically expose the limits of many pedagogical methods to produce 'men', they demonstrate the ways in which these characters learn to be boys. Finally, it will consider the extent to which this production of early modern age and gender identity in the plays is paralleled by the historical boy actors performing these roles.

Cet essai s'intéresse aux leçons de Moth, le page-écolier-jeune acteur de *Peines d'amour perdues*, afin d'étudier la façon dont était générée l'identité des jeunes garçons dans la culture de la première modernité. On confrontera le personnage créé par Shakespeare à l'écolier imaginé par John Marston dans *What You Will*, Holofernes Pippo, pour se demander comment les leçons des écoliers pouvaient produire des identités marquées par l'âge et le genre plus complexes que les interprétations que l'on donne habituellement de la masculinité à cette époque. Grâce à une lecture des leçons comiques mises en scène dans ces pièces, on suggérera que si le système éducatif avait pour ambition de façonner des sujets identifiés par leur genre, l'identité masculine se présente à la Renaissance comme une gradation de catégories sur une échelle de développement. Bien que Moth et Pippo mettent en lumière de façon comique les limites de nombreuses méthodes pédagogiques destinées à produire des « hommes », ils apprennent aussi à être des garçons. On complétera l'analyse par une étude du statut et des modalités de construction de l'identité chez les jeunes acteurs qui jouaient ces rôles sur scène à l'époque.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : éducation, enfance, garçons, jeunes acteurs, Marston John, *Peines d'amour perdues*, *What You Will*

Keyword : boyhood, boy actors, early modern schooling, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Marston John, *What You Will*